

Feeding your two to three (2-3) year old child

You made it through the first year and now you may be wondering what the toddler years will bring. Healthy eating and regular mealtimes are important for continued growth and development of your child. Children at this age are not small adults; they are still learning about the world of eating and experiencing food variety and texture. A child's stomach is as big as his/her fist, which means they can't eat large, adult-sized portions. Remember, your job as a parent is to decide what kinds of healthy foods to serve at meals and your child's job is to decide whether to eat and how much to eat.

Here are more tips:

- Serve meals and snacks around same time every day.
- Serve small portions for small stomachs. A portion size is:
 - Milk, Yogurt or Cheese: $\frac{1}{2}$ cup, 1 slice
 - Vegetables: $\frac{1}{4}$ - $\frac{1}{2}$ cup cooked
 - Fruit: $\frac{1}{2}$ medium piece of fruit, 4 oz juice
 - Bread and Grains: $\frac{1}{2}$ -1 slice of bread, $\frac{1}{2}$ cup cereal, 4 crackers
 - Meat and Beans: 1-2 oz meat or poultry, $\frac{1}{4}$ - $\frac{1}{2}$ cup beans
- After age two, children should switch to skim or 1% milk and have up to two cups per day.
- Dilute 100% fruit juice with water if your child wants more juice. Better yet, whole fruit (like apples, peaches, bananas) are healthier than juice.
- If your child drinks juice, offer up to 4 ounces per day (about $\frac{1}{2}$ cup).
- Children eat better when an adult is sharing a meal with them. Children will model your eating habits.
- Children at this age are messy eaters; let them experience their food by eating fast or slowly, using their fingers, and letting them smell and touch the food.
- Toddlers are unpredictable. Their eating habits and preferences change every day.
- Don't get discouraged if your child refuses a new food. It can take 10-15 times of offering the same food before your child will try it.